

Soldiers make time for Three Kings Day In Iraq

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Imagine just two weeks after Christmas getting together with friends and family, singing songs, exchanging gifts and eating wonderful dishes. These traditions are common on Three King's Day every year in Puerto Rico.

This year, Soldiers from the 130th Engineer Battalion, a National Guard unit from Puerto Rico, celebrated their festive holiday while deployed to Iraq Jan. 5.

Three King's Day is a holiday that pays respect to the kings who visited Jesus Christ when he was born, said 1st Sgt. Juan Alicia, the top noncommissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 130th Eng. Bn. One of the traditions of the holiday, Alicia said, is to place fresh cut grass and water underneath children's bed.

When children wake up in the morning the three kings



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th MPAD)

Soldiers from the 130th Engineer Battalion, from Puerto Rico, celebrate Three Kings Day by dancing and singing festive songs at Camp Liberty, in Baghdad, Jan. 5. The traditional Puerto Rican holiday is filled with singing, dancing and eating.

leave gifts under the bed, like the way Santa delivers presents, said Edwin Rancel, a native of Arecho, Puerto Rico, with HHC, 130th Eng. Bn.

The grass and water is for

the king's camels, and the gifts given from the kings, to show their gratitude, he added.

"One thing to know about Puerto Ricans, is that from Thanksgiving Day to

mid-January is one gigantic party," Alicia said, a native of Caguas, Puerto Rico.

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Iraqi Army, police team up for joint operation on Haifa Street

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - The 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment's Military Transition Team has been overseeing operations performed by the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division for more than two months now.

To effectively beef up law enforcement and security in the area, another group of Iraqis stepped up to join into the

fight to make Haifa Street a safer place.

On Dec. 28, the Iraqi Army battalion teamed up with police from the Al-Jeafer Police Station in a joint operation to seize high-value targets.

They also wanted to show the locals they had a police force they could count on, said Maj. Chris Norrie, the commander of the 4-9 MTT.

U.S. and Iraqi troops and the police targeted an area where intelligence resources reported the wanted men were

staying.

The police and Iraqi soldiers stormed the building and went floor-by-floor looking for their targets. Unfortunately, none were found, but Norrie said finding high-value targets wasn't necessarily what it was all about.

The Barton, Vt. native said that the operation between the Iraqi police and army was the first step in building a rela-

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Soldiers bring healing touch to local children

By Capt. Chris Sanchez
4th Battalion, 31st Inf. Reg.

YUSUFIYAH, Iraq - Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) receive attention for their rapid air assaults and fierce fighting. But in the village of Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, they are now also known for their tenderness toward local children.

Soldiers of Company B, 4-31st at Patrol Base Rushdi Mullah were visited by two young boys seeking medical help Dec. 25. One of the boys, Ra'ad, had been shot several weeks before when terrorists wanted to use his family's house to attack the patrol base. When Raad's father refused them entry, one of the terrorists shot the boy.

The Soldiers treated Ra'ad after the attack and transported him to Ibn Sina Hospital in Baghdad's International Zone, and have been changing the dressings on his wounds regularly ever since. They changed the dressings again on Christmas, and also treated Ra'ad's brother, Ahmed, for a skin rash affecting the boy's scalp.

But assistance to the children of Rushdi Mullah didn't stop there according



(U.S. Army photo)

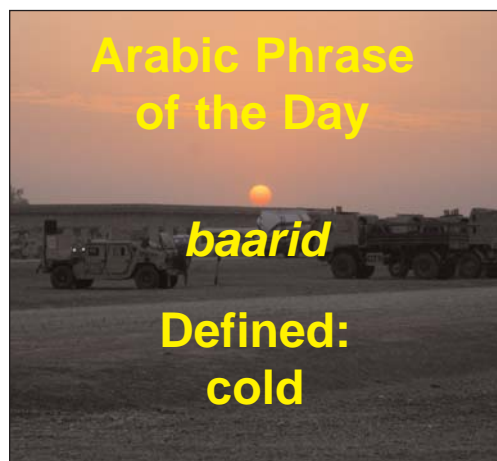
Two Iraqi brothers, Ra'ad (left) and Ahmed, visit with Soldiers of the 31st Inf. Reg., 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) at Patrol Base Rushdi Mullah, Iraq. Ra'ad and Ahmed received medical care from the Soldiers of the company.

to one member for the company.

"The Soldiers of 4-31 care a great deal for the people of Rushdi Mullah," said Capt. Christopher Vitale, a native of Washington, Penn., and commander of Co. B. "They have gathered donations and provided soccer cleats and other equipment

for the children of the town out of their own pockets."

The people of Rushdi Mullah have responded to this act of generosity by providing tips to the Soldiers on terrorist activities, forging a strong relationship with benefit to all involved.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



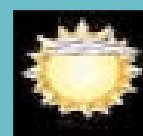
Today

High: 52
Low: 39



Tomorrow

High: 54
Low: 34



Wednesday

High: 56
Low: 33

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Editor: Sgt. Michael Garrett
Staff Writers: Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Pfc. Ben Gable, Pfc. Shea Butler, Pfc. William Hatton
Contributing Writers: Capt. Chris Sanchez, Sgt. Colby Hauser, Spc.

Alexis Harrison
Contact the *Daily Charge* at VOIP 242-4093, DSN 318-847-2855 or e-mail david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil.

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Puerto Rican troops bring Three Kings Day to Camp Liberty

Kings

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A fun custom that Puerto Ricans often observe is going door-to-door very early in the morning singing songs and playing instruments, said Spc. Jeremias Sanchez, HHC, 130th Eng. Bn.

"Being woken up by your friends isn't always great, but the fun part is waking them up the same way the next morning," he added.

"When you get visited by someone singing early in the morning, once they're done you go with them to the next house," said Alicia. "Sometimes a group will start with just a few people, but by the end of the singing and visiting with friends there will be like a hundred people with you."

Food also plays a central part in the festivities, Alicia said.

"One of the biggest parts



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th MPAD)

Soldiers from the 130th Engineer Battalion, from Puerto Rico, dish out traditional food in celebration of Three Kings Day at Camp Liberty, in Baghdad, Jan. 5.

of the holiday is cooking great meals," Alicia said. "We ordered 10 pigs from Germany so we could celebrate the holiday right."

Roasting pigs is a must during the festivities, Alicia

added.

As these Puerto Rican troops spend Three King's Day away from home, efforts to make the holiday meaningful and fun are very important, said Sanchez, a native of San

Sebastian, Puerto Rico.

With the festivities and traditional Puerto Rican food served, the Soldiers were able to take a break from the hardships of deployment and feel a little at home.



(Photo by Pfc. Benjamin Gable, 7th MPAD)

Stryker troops take a break

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, pause between missions to play a game of spades at Forward Operating Base Justice Jan. 4. These Soldiers were part of a four-day humanitarian mission in northern Baghdad in which coalition forces handed out blankets, food supplies and medicine to local Iraqis.

Iraqi Army, Police hit Haifa Street

Team

From Page 1

tionship that would hopefully lead to future joint operations.

According to Norrie, this was the first time in more than 16 months that the Iraqi police and army have worked together in this area.

"The (Iraqi Army) and (police) are much stronger together than they ever would be if they were apart," Norrie said. "It's been a long time since IP's have done a search, a raid or any kind of joint operation here, and they were clearly excited to be out there."

Norrie remarked about the strengths and tenacity the police seemed to carry with them.

"The IPs didn't have armored vehicles like the army had, but they were not afraid in the least," he said. "The Iraqis will take the fight to the insurgents. They're out on the streets every day despite some equipment and personnel issues, but they're out there ... going after the bad guys."

"The mission was capturing the terrorist because they are harming the Iraqi people, and we will not allow them to do it ... if God is willing," said



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

The 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment's Military Transition Team commander, Maj. Chris Norrie, speaks to an Iraqi police captain during a joint operation in central Baghdad. The operation marked the first time the Iraqi Army teamed up with Iraqi police to conduct a joint operation on Haifa Street in more than 16 months.

one Iraqi police officer.

Norrie said locals in this area hadn't seen a policeman in almost two years. He said the return of the police force to one of the deadliest places in the capital could bring a renewed

hope to a city torn by sectarian violence.

"We hope to build momentum from this and get the guys they're after and other guys that are doing harm in the area," Norrie said.

"It's all anybody wants is to protect the local populace. That's the key," Norrie added.

Norrie said his team's mission is of the utmost importance. The team works with the Iraqi army every day to ensure coalition help is readily available to aid the Iraqis in the fight against insurgents.


1st Sgt. Joseph MacFarlane, from Traverse City, Mich., said that although the roles of the army and police

differ, they find a common ground in wanting to see the streets become safer.

"For the people on the street, they see the American forces, the Iraqi Army and the police working together," MacFarlane said.


"It's great for them, for a sense of security. Hopefully, they will open their arms to the police force as well as the Iraqi Army," MacFarlane added.

MacFarlane said as joint operations become more commonplace, the confidence among the Iraqi security forces will also continue to grow, as the Iraqi Army, police and coalition military transition teams work together.



First Team

POWER THOUGHT



"I CAN SAVE MY OWN LIFE"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I am responsible for my own safety both on and off post.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Because I AM important, my friends and family love me,
My unit needs me, and my nation is depending on me.

New center puts First Team families first

By Sgt. Colby Hauser
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - "Our Soldiers and families deserve the very best," said Wendy Fil, the "First Lady" of the 1st Cavalry Division, during her opening remarks at the grand re-opening of the division's Soldier and Family Readiness Center here Jan. 5.

Fil, the wife of the division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., said what started out as an idea back in 1998 during the First Team's deployment to Bosnia, has blossomed into a first-rate facility whose sole purpose is to take care of the troops and family members of the Cav.

"We started to remodel the facility back in September," said Master Sgt. Dennis Johnson, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the SFRC. "Now, we can offer a truly first-class facility to our Soldiers, Family Readiness Groups and families."

Comfortable leather furniture and large screen televisions entertained the guests as tours of the facility's grounds and its capabilities were demonstrated. Troops topped off with Stetsons led the visitors throughout the various rooms while others viewed the technology available on the premises.

Johnson said that the 4500-square foot facility was not only improved inside and out, but special attention was taken to add



(Photo by Sgt. Colby Hauser, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Wendy Fil (right), the wife of the 1st Cavalry Division's commanding general, and Belkys Quinones, a long-time volunteer for the division, cut a yellow ribbon signifying the official re-opening of the division's Soldier and Family Readiness Center at Fort Hood Jan. 5.

a human touch.

"We had a vision (for the SFRC) and we got that vision from Mrs. Wendy Fil," said Col. Larry Phelps, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division-Rear. "We wanted to make it as much like home as possible."

Phelps said that although the SFRC is fully equipped to accomplish the mission of supporting Soldiers and families, the overall goal was to make it feel like a safe haven for those using the center.

Some of the resources the SFRC can provide are three large classrooms, two lounge areas, eight internet computers with

web cam capabilities, a large kitchen and a children's play area for the division's "Little Team."

There are also photo copiers, fax machines and three stand-alone computers to assist family readiness groups produce their monthly newsletters.

However, what most of the rear command was excited about was that the center successfully completed a video teleconference or VTC with troops down range a week prior to the reopening, allowing more families to stay connected with their troops in Iraq.

TELEVISION



	8:00p.m.	8:30p.m.	9:00p.m.	9:30p.m.	10:00p.m.	10:30p.m.	11:00p.m.
AFN sports	College Football	Sports Center	NFL Live	College Gamenight (9:20)	NBA Fastbreak (9:40)	Sports Center	NBA: Rockets at Bulls
AFN prime ATLANTIC	Prime News Tonight		NBC Nightly News	ABC World News	Sesame Street		The View
AFN news	Special Report with Brit Hume		Your World with Neil Cavuto		World News Now		ATIS/Regional News